1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

674 very few serious disputes arise in Abujhmar, where a
murder is extremely rare and due usually to some suspicion of
572 black magic. The Bison-horn Maria, on the other hand, is subject to sudden fits of blind rage, especially after he has been taking large quantities of his intoxicating gruel, *landa*, which is anathema to the Hill Marias. In that state he will seize any weapon that comes to hand, whether it be his wife's heavy rice pestle, a log of wood, an axe or a bow and arrow, and murder for the most trivial of reasons; the State Jail at Jagdalpur has always a high percentage of Bison-horn Marias doing time for homicide. He also is capable of nursing his revenge for a long time; a recent example was given by a strapping Bison-horn Maria from Palnar, who, after serving twelve years of a commuted death sentence, soon after his release took the first chance of picking a quarrel with a man whom he considered deliberately to have let him down by not giving evidence in his defence twelve years before, and battered his head in with a heavy bamboo stick. The Bison-horn Maria will in his fury declare an implacable enmity by stalking round his foe's house three times, either plucking straws from the thatch, or whistling the peculiar *su'i* whistle, or throwing some of his own pubic hairs at the house; and murder is the inevitable result. There were twenty-seven murder trials in Bastar between 1917 and 1923, and in eighteen of them the murderers were Bison-horn Marias, but only two of the murders were committed by Hill Marias. About half the Bison-horn Maria murders are committed in *landa* intoxication, and almost the same proportion in sudden fits of rage about nothing; for example, wives often are killed when the husband dislikes his food or it is not ready for him; one even lost her life for refusing to cook for her husband when he woke up hungry in the middle of the night. But there are on record Bison-horn Maria murders committed for all the ordinary sordid and criminal murder motives; the Bison-horn Maria is a man of far stronger feelings
[158] than the Hill Maria. The former actually runs amuck on occasion like the Malay; in two such cases the offender pleaded that he suffered from fits and ran amuck under the delusion, in the one case, of pursuit and, in the other, of possession by evil spirits and of the
628 imminence of a new rebellion. Cain indeed wrote in 1876 that 'blood revenge' had hardly died out in the Godavari valley, and was said to be 'in full exercise' in Bastar. The only apparent case of a hereditary vendetta of which I am aware occurred in Orcha, a Hill Maria village, where a grandfather and his son were murdered at long intervals for suspected witchcraft, while the grandson conveniently fell off a sago-palm tree as soon as he was old enough to claim the hereditary post of *pargana* headman.
692 There is a strong feeling everywhere of an eye for an eye and a tooth

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for a tooth; but nowadays this is generally satisfied by invoking the police and the courts. But distances are great in Bastar, and in the rains, when the early hill grains are ripe, communications are bad; often the villagers conspire to hush up a murder or leave it to those affected to take their own direct action, rather than disorganize agricultural work by the troubles of a long police enquiry followed by committal proceedings and a sessions trial.

It is a relief to return from this darker side of the Bison-horn Maria's character to the light-heartedness of all Marias, but especially the Hill Maria. An engaging feature of this is his readiness to burlesque himself. A village *gaita* (headman) at Tondawada set the whole camp in fits of laughter by his description of his first vain attempts to use a pair of bullocks in the plough, mimicking himself pulled hither and thither by these wild-cat animals; at Hikul I was treated to a similar comic representation of what would happen if a Maria attempted to milk a cow. They are quick to seize on any foibles or peculiarities of individuals, without respect of persons, and have a happy knack of inventing apposite nicknames; this trait is common throughout the State, where there are nicknames for almost every State official current among all the primitive tribes, while few of the leading Hindu and Mohammedan settlers are referred to by their true names.

Frankness and honesty are still as characteristic as ever of the hill men and the wilder Bison-horn Marias, and many a man arraigned for homicide will state in court perfectly frankly why it was essential to kill his victim and how it was done. I have very seldom found any hesitate to answer any questions, even about the most intimate domestic matters. The Bison-horn Maria, however, being, at least in the open tracts, more sophisticated, is inclined to be suspicious; and he certainly is learning the ways of the courts, and how to defeat a justice administered on the evidence and not according to the facts; many know, for example, that the death penalty may be escaped if you can convince your judge that you murdered your victim because you believed him to be bewitching you. But in general a Maria witness can still be relied upon to speak the truth, although it involve his dearest relatives or himself in trouble; and the occasional pleader from British India is soon hopelessly at sea if he tries his usual methods of cross-examination even on a Bison-horn Maria who knows Halbi. Fortunately, the restoration of the criminal and civil jurisdiction of the village and *pargana* panchayats will considerably reduce Maria experience of the law courts. The Hill Maria never has had much recourse to them, petty theft being almost unknown and murder rare. His attitude may to some extent be gauged by the following example.

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beginning to use carts, but many villages still keep Rawats to tend and milk their cattle and manufacture ghee. They are inveterate eaters of beef, not only at funeral ceremonies or when raising a stone for the dead, but at *pandum* ceremonies, family or clan gatherings, the completion of a new tank and similar occasions. Most villages have a rocky place set apart for skinning and eating cattle. They are reluctant to kill and eat only their own cattle; on the borders of the Jagdalpur Muria country, especially at the time of the *pandum*, they often attempt to steal young heifers or calves from the nearest Muria or non-Muria village: I had once to impose a collective fine on the villagers of Nennor for hiring two men who had been convicted for two or three former thefts to go to the Muria village of Erokot and steal a bullock, which was the mainstay of the Nennor new-eating feast.

Hill and Bison-horn Marias keep tame dogs and cats, and the dogs of the latter are often well-trained hunting dogs who will go with their masters in a beat without giving tongue.

Dogs and cats

Bison-horn Marias coax a dog to them by calling '*Durro*,[1] *durro!*' and a cat (*pusali*) by '*Mini*,[1] *mini!*' while '*Darra, darra!*' is used for driving a dog off.

Other pets

Bison-horn Marias occasionally keep parrots and bulbuls, and some of them use hawks for catching quail and other small birds.

D. Fishing

All Marias make their own rods of bamboo and lines of *kosa* silk; the hooks are generally in these days bought in the markets, but occasionally thorns are said to be used. They use rods only in the rains, and bait their hooks with worms or with *konda*, a paste of rice chaff.

The Kuruk or Jaralur are the Maria fishing caste of the big river valleys, speaking the Gondi dialect of the neighbouring villages. The Kuruks of the Indrawati valley from Nelasnar to Bhamragarh are scarcely distinguishable from the Hill Marias in appearance and customs, but the Hill Marias look down on them and do not allow inter-marriage; like those of potters and blacksmiths, their houses are carefully segregated from Maria houses. They maintain ferry services in their dug-out canoes on the Indrawati, and are paid an annual retainer in grain by the Hill Maria villages which frequent Gidam, Nelasnar, Bhairamgarh and Kutru

[1] I have since heard *Durro* and *Mini* used in the same way not only by Gonds but by Korkus also in the Hoshangabad district of the Central Provinces.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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753 is that it is caused by magic and best cured by detection of the magician, or by white counter-magic.

761 Black magic is still suspected as the cause of death by all Marias. Bison-horn Marias consider it proved if, when they return 754 next day to the pyre where they left a corpse burning, they find part of the body unburnt. Hill Marias, through a *waddai* clan-priest [187] or his medium assistant, call on the corpse to impel its bearers to one of seven leaves that represent the possible causes of death; three of these leaves represent the magic of a fellow-villager, the magic of a *waddai* or medium, and the magic of a man at enmity with the deceased owing to a quarrel. All log-gods, whether Maria clan-gods or the various Anga-deo and Pat-deo of the Halbas and Murias, have the power of detecting witchcraft, either by impelling their bearers to the offender (the usual way among non-Marias) or through their oracles the *waddai* (or *wedde* or *wadde*). In previous chapters we have seen witchcraft regarded as the cause of the blacksmith's iron ore[1] failing to produce good iron when smelted, and of the spoiling of the flowering peduncles of the *salphi* tree[2] by worms and grubs. In fact, again to quote Glasfurd[3]:—

> 'The people invariably impute their misfortunes to witchcraft. If a man's bullock dies, it is caused by witchcraft; if his crops fail, it is because the land has been bewitched by someone who is at enmity with the owner; a lingering sickness or painful disease is laid at the door of an enemy, and, in short, from the most common affairs of everyday life to the most serious, every evil that befalls a family is imputed to witchcraft.'

674 Suspected witchcraft was the cause of eight out of the eighteen murders committed between 1917 and 1923 by Bison-horn Marias 754 and of the two murders committed by Hill Marias; it was the alleged cause in the one Hill Maria and six of the eleven Bison-horn 683 Maria murder cases which I tried between 1927 and 1931 as *ex-officio* Sessions Judge. Glasfurd[3] went on to give details of the cruel treatment meted out in his day to persons suspected of witchcraft; the final test applied to a suspect, even if the preliminary test had been in his favour, was to sew him up in a sack, and duck him in waist-deep water, adjudging him guilty if in his struggles for life he managed to raise himself above the water; he was then beaten by the crowd, his head shaved, and his front teeth knocked out with a stone, to prevent him muttering his incantations. He was pelted with all kinds of filth, made to eat degrading food, and driven out of the country. But, with one exception, in none of the many murder and assault cases arising out of suspected witchcraft which occurred while I was in Bastar and of the previous cases of which I have notes was any action taken by Maria village communities

[1] See p. 176. [2] See p. 168. [3] Report, pp. 52-4.

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to molest suspects. There were cases from Muria and Bhattra villages where the community inflicted degrading punishments only somewhat less cruel than those of Glasfurd's day; but in all but one of the Maria cases the man who believed himself wronged acted entirely on his own, often after consulting the god through a *waddai* medium, and killed or tried to kill the suspect with any weapon that came handy. The exception was the 1916 Hill Maria murder at Orcha, in which many villagers combined against the *pargana* headman, who, like his father before him, was said to have been expert in the black art, and to have used it and his position as headman to set up a '*raj*' over the *pargana*. They combined to seize him at night, crushed his testicles and hanged him from a creeper. Nor were women ever suspected in Maria cases, although in three cases among Jagdalpur Murias and Bhattras women suspects were very roughly handled. In two Bison-horn murders it was clear that the murdered man had threatened his murderer to bewitch him, and one of these blackmailers was himself a *waddai*. In fact, the *waddai* is generally believed by the Bison-horn Marias to know black magic as well as white magic and divination, and is apt to be feared accordingly.

It is naturally difficult to ascertain the methods believed to be used by the black magician; those who imagined they had suffered judged the fact solely from the nature of their sufferings, the word of the *waddai* consulted as to their source, and, perhaps, the known enmity of the suspect towards them, while naturally no practitioner of black magic cared to admit it or to describe his methods. Black magic is commonly referred to as *pangan*; and popular talk confirms the methods described at page 43 of the *Gazetteer*:—

> 'Whenever an enemy's life is to be taken, a bit of his cloth or hair is offered to a god with some incantations consisting of a string of names of godlings, and the victim should then pine away, unless he in turn calls in a magician. This practice is locally called *kuda marna*. Another plan is for the magician to put up two bits of grass tied in the form of a cross to represent his client's enemy, and, after going through incantations, shoot at the little figure with a miniature bow and arrow made of grass. If the arrow hits the mark it is believed that the enemy will surely die, unless he has recourse to magic to avert the spell.'

The information on which this was based came from the mixed Hill and Bison-horn Maria country around Barsur, and the word 'magician' is a translation of '*waddai*'.

White Magic

The white magic in vogue is merely the counter-magic used by a friendly *waddai* to avert or cure illness and disease. Of actual Hill Maria methods I obtained no notes; but certain *waddais* or *leskis* have a much greater reputation than others. I gather that Hill Maria methods do not differ from those in vogue among Bison-horn Marias and Murias, in which

[See cat. 116, pp. 423-424.—Ed.]

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586 732 no difficulty in getting wives to stay with them. Dwarfs, on the other hand, not only find it hard to get wives except their elder brothers' widows, but are passed over in the succession to a post of responsibility or the management of a family. Madness is particularly dreaded, and would certainly involve the elopement of a wife. But husbands, though they would divorce a mad [833] woman *a thoro*, would still maintain them; sexual intercourse with a mad woman is believed to result in complete loss of virility. 586 I have heard of no case in which a husband has divorced his wife; she may be frigid or barren or in other ways unsatisfactory, but so long as she is not unfaithful her husband is expected to maintain her, and his remedy is to seek another co-wife, often getting her younger sister or parallel-cousin as compensation for her falling ● [674] short of expectations. The murder of wives in sudden fits of temper for petty shortcomings is unfortunately common among the Bison-horn Marias, though almost unknown in the hills. Nor must it [837] be assumed that because Bison-horn wives often elope, their husbands tamely submit to infidelity; the detection of an intrigue often results in the husband killing the wife or her paramour, though once a wife has made good her escape to another man's house the [593] husband usually accepts the *fait accompli*. The beating or ill-treatment of wives is strongly condemned by all Marias.[a]

[a] [See cat. 116, p. 425. – Analyst]

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766 At Paknar in May 1930 I tried the murderer of a man whose body had been taken to Jagdalpur by the police for *post mortem* examination and had been buried there. In the course of the trial I visited the spot where the accused had shot him dead with a bow and arrow as he and the villagers helping him were carrying his *kutki* harvest from his *penda* field to his granary. His kinsmen had performed funeral rites for him there, sacrificing, roasting and eating two cocks and a pig, hanging up the loin-cloth which he was wearing when killed, and which they had brought back from Jagdalpur, and throwing rice and other grains at the trunk of the tree. They had also thrown away there all the earthen pots in his house except the Pot of the Departed, and his wife had burnt her bangles there. They had poured a libation of *mahua* spirit on the ground at the foot of the tree, which had been stained by his blood, and had adjured his *hanal* to be contented with this, stay with the *hanal* of the other Departed and bring no trouble upon them. A little *mahua* seed oil had then been added in his name to the Pot of the Departed in the *wijja-lon* of his house.

Abnormal deaths

Often when a person is murdered or drowned or dies in any unnatural way, a great cairn of stones is erected over his remains at the spot where he died, known as a *punji-paknar* in Halbi, and any passer-by is supposed to pick up a stone and fling it on the top of the cairn. The custom is common to all the peoples of Bastar, including the Hill Marias; in 1913 two Hill Marias murdered a Maria Lohar girl, with whom both had often cohabited, through fear of the disgrace one of them would incur if the child which she had conceived were born and she named him as the father. The village elders hushed up the murder, and removed the body to the head of a pass crossing the Tiralgarh hills, and there a huge *punji-paknar* was piled over the remains.

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Victims of small-pox and women dying in pregnancy or child-birth are buried by Bison-horn Marias, but not in the regular cremation ground. Before these women can be buried, a *wadde* or *gunia* has to shut up her malignant spirit by driving iron nails into her knees and elbows. But *uraskal* menhirs are erected for them and for victims of small-pox. Persons killed by lightning are cremated at some distance from the ordinary cremation ground, and no menhir may be erected for them. Menhirs are also forbidden for persons killed by tigers, whose remains are burned in the forest where they are found, with whatever possessions were with them when attacked or killed. A dummy tiger is made of bamboo sticks, taken to the boundary of the village, and there burnt.

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revenge she ' destroyed his seed '. For several years he was unable to get a child, though in the end the Perma diagnosed the trouble and after the proper sacrifices his wife conceived.

A number of recent murders were due either to the desire of a victim to be revenged on a witch or wizard or to a man's resentment at being accused of sorcery. The Orcha murder of 1941 was due to a Hill Maria called Mukka suspecting that the Gaita, Pidche, was practising sorcery against him. After killing him he put the corpse in a stream, but next day recovered and buried it, the whole village agreeing to hush the matter up. The following year Podiyami Doma of Michnar killed Kuharami Konda during a New Eating Festival because the latter accused him of being a thief and a sorcerer. On November 26th, 1941 Gumma Karwe, a young Bison-horn Maria, killed his uncle Gumma Galla at Toinar. Only three months previously Karwe had been married. One day his young wife went with his father and step-mother to visit relations at Gummalnar, a journey that took them over the Indrawati. It was October and I well remember the heavy floods that year. The water swept away the canoe in which they were crossing the river and the bodies were never recovered. A month later, while uncle and nephew were drinking palm wine together they began to quarrel. The younger man accused his uncle of causing the death of his wife, on whom he had spent twenty rupees in cash and three measures of paddy, by magic. Galla admitted it, even boasted of it, and threatened to kill him in the same way. The boy, wild with rage and fear, killed Galla forthwith by a heavy blow from his axe.

At the beginning of March 1944, one evening as the crescent moon was rising above the eastern horizon, there was a violent quarrel in Barse Bendo's house at Kadampal, and a few hours later one of the disputants crept out of his house and stabbed his enemy to death with an arrow as he lay asleep. Barse Bendo was a well-known and successful magician with a large practice. In the same village a youngish man called Kunjami Gota set up as a Siraha and seems to have succeeded in drawing away some of Bendo's patients and creating a sense of rivalry and opposition. Gota's own uncle, Kunjami Tonda, however, preferred the treatment of the older and more experienced man, and when his wife Mate fell ill at the beginning of 1944 he took her to Bendo, and not to his nephew, for consultation. She soon recovered, but shortly afterwards Tonda's two little sons, Lakhma and Bala, fell ill and he came with his whole family to stay in a leaf-hut built for patients in Bendo's compound. Bala was cured in a day or two, but Lakhma, who had a swollen face, did not improve. Here was Bendo's chance. At the time of divination he skilfully introduced the name of Gota

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754 578 674 into his ravings and afterwards declared that it had been revealed to him that the child's illness had been caused by the evil influence of his rival whom he now denounced as a Pangnaha or sorcerer. Gota was summoned to the house and when he came Tonda—prompted by Bendo—asked him to perform antidotal magic to undo the harm he had done and so cure the little boy. This was a clever move. If Gota agreed he became a self-confessed Pangnaha; if he refused to treat a patient, Bendo would see to it that his reputation as a Siraha was destroyed. Gota chose the safer course, and declared that he knew nothing about the treatment of the sick. They all protested at this, reminding him how they had seen him curing disease by *mana-bujha* and sprinkling rice on the heads of ailing children. Tonda said, 'Bendo has cured Bala, but he can't do anything for Lakhma. You are a new man and have cured other people's children. Now cure your own cousin.' But Gota still refused. This made Tonda furious, for the refusal confirmed his suspicion, so carefully fostered by the jealous and wily Bendo, that Gota himself was responsible for the trouble, and that in fact he was an impostor, not a Siraha at all, but a mere Pangnaha. He lost control of himself and began to shout insults and accusations at his nephew, saying that he was trying to kill his own cousins and was of such unbearable wickedness that even when he was found out he would do nothing to remedy matters. In the quarrel the two men came to blows, but they were separated and Gota was taken back to his house. The others went to sleep and Tonda lay down outside the little hut where his wife watched by the sick child. But Gota, angry and brooding over the accusation which he knew well would spoil his practice as a Siraha and thus ruin him economically as well as socially, waited for some hours and then crept into Bendo's compound and stabbed Tonda to death with an arrow. Gota was brought to trial and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment, escaping the gallows partly in consequence of a passage (on p. xxvi) in *Maria Murder and Suicide* which was quoted in the judgement.

To understand the Japgunda murder of 1943 a certain amount of family history must be related. Masa, a Hill Maria of Japgunda, had two brothers Gai and Bija. When Gai died, leaving a widow and a daughter Muri, his younger brother inherited the widow along with the property and adopted a boy named Erka as a Lamana'i to work for his step-daughter. When the period of service was complete, Erka and Muri were married and both continued to live in Bija's house until in due time Erka succeeded, on Bija's death, to control of the household and became guardian of Bija's three little sons, Suku, Gilu and Aga.

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Masa, the children's uncle and sole survivor of the elder branch of the family, was the Waddai of the clan-god of Japgunda. He seems to have resented the way a poor Lamana'i boy like Erka had risen in the world and become owner of both his brothers' property, and there was some tension in the relations between the two houses. For five or six years, Erka had had good crops and Masa bad ones, and Masa decided that his failure must be due to the fact that Erka was practising magic against him. One day he openly accused the younger man of sorcery and challenged him to an ordeal. Erka, who had no desire to quarrel, accepted and a pot of boiling water and cowdung was prepared. Erka dipped his fingers into it and was badly burned.

This incident convinced the villagers that Erka was a sorcerer and had a curious effect on his own character. He found that, far from being a social outcaste, he—the poor Lamana'i boy—was believed to have the ear of the goddess Parkal Muttai and that many people were coming to him for advice and help. He grew proud and arrogant and when he caused the death of a calf, a pig and a fowl belonging to Masa, no one dared to remonstrate with him. Bija's little boys were growing up and Erka built a house of his own near by. Presently Aga was to be married and some time late in August 1943 the wedding was held in Bija's old house. Masa was, of course, invited but on his way to join the festivities—for the essence of a Hill Maria marriage is a dance, a drink and a heavy meal—Erka went out to intercept him. He greeted him pleasantly and showing him a gourd of rice-beer took him aside to drink with him on the bank of the village pond. Some time later boys coming in their finery for the marriage dance saw the two men sitting together by the water under a virgin moon. The next day Masa's mutilated body was found in the pond.

Erka immediately used his reputation as a sorcerer to hush the matter up. He called the elders to his house, bribed the Kotwar whose duty it was to report suspicious deaths to the police, and taking the headman and another person of some influence aside, sat them down and drew on the ground what was described at the trial as a 'magic line'. He put dub grass, a knife and a bit of cowdung on it and two rupees on one side and three rupees on the other. Then he asked the two men to pick up the money, saying that this act bound them to secrecy. Deeply impressed, the headman went out and told the other villagers that they must cremate the body at once and make no report to the authorities. On the way to the pyre the usual divination by *sāja* leaves was performed and indicated that Masa had died by violence. It was five months before rumours of the crime reached the police.

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I do not in any way emphasize it, but it seems to me curious that many crimes connected with sorcery are associated with water; they are performed on the banks of ponds or rivers and in several instances the body has been thrown into the water afterwards. Does a murderer who has killed a sorcerer believe that there is some spiritual antiseptic for him in throwing his victim's body into water?

IV

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Grigson has studied in detail the custom of the Hill Marias in regard to menstruation, pregnancy and birth, but his notes on the Bison-horn Marias need, as he says, 'considerable supplementing'. The Bison-horn Marias have the curious belief that men, not women, were originally subject to a menstrual period. They used to tie hollow bamboos to their organs to catch the discharge. Once—according to one legend—a girl was laughing at a man in this distressing and inconvenient condition, and he lost his temper and threw the bamboo at her; in another story a sister wanted to help her brother, who could not cut his clearing properly on account of the bamboo tagged on in front of him, and offered to take it instead.

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Yet other legends ascribe the origin of menstruation to a wound. There were formerly teeth in the vagina and when these were removed, the wound was not wholly healed. Once the vagina was in the crick of the leg behind the knee—you can still see its shape—but a hen pecked at it and the frightened organ jumped for safety to its hiding-place between the thighs. But it was hurt and it still bleeds every month at the recollection.

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All the Gond tribes are very strict about the menstrual taboos, in this contrasting sharply with the Orissa Bondos, Gadabas, and Saoras, who are at a similar stage of culture and live not very far away. Grigson has described the extreme rigorism of the Hill Marias and has rightly suggested that the Bison-horn Marias are somewhat less apprehensive of the dangers of menstruation. But they too, like the Murias and the Gonds generally, are strict enough in their application of the taboo and breach of it may be punished by the Departed through the bite of a snake or the destruction of the harvest. They do not usually build special menstruation huts, but sometimes where there is a girls' dormitory, menstruating women sleep on one side of the hut and unmarried girls on the other. In such villages, no married woman may go near the dormitory nor should youths enter it. Not all dormitories however are used in this way.

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Elsewhere part of the veranda of the ordinary living-house is screened off or a little hut is built in the compound for the use of

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of ghotul leaders; it is distributed when a boy or girl leaves the ghotul after marriage; it is a convenient and compendious means of paying a fine. The chelik offer it to their drums before a wedding, and drink it in honour of Lingo at the end of the Pus Kolang dance.

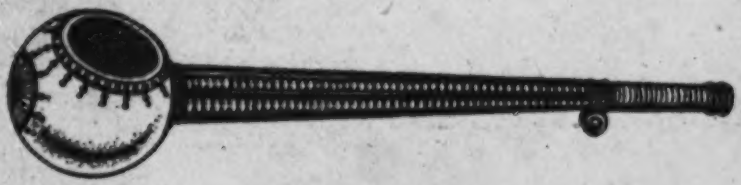

FIG. 13. Brass *arki* used for ladling liquor
Length 8"-9"

This homely drink, so intimately connected with every aspect of their lives, so accessible to the forest-dwellers, so readily and cheaply prepared, may not be distilled by the Muria in Bastar or by the aboriginals anywhere. Its profits must be divided between the State and the middleman. Home-distillation is everywhere forbidden, and the privilege of the manufacture and sale of the spirit is farmed out to contractors in open auction. The business has thus passed into the hands of the most degenerate type of Hindu and Mussalman adventurer, for few aboriginals have either the means or the enterprise to compete with the sophisticated aggression of the outside world in the open market. These adventurers rob both the aboriginals and the State. They dilute the spirit; they put soda in it to cover the fact of their tampering; they make false returns; they use filthy water in unclean pots;[1] their shops are centres of the most degraded type of alien immigrant into tribal territory.

When the National Congress came into power in 1938, they declared that they would not apply their Prohibition laws to Europeans or aboriginals. It would have been more consistent had they allowed the aboriginal to distil his own liquor and had thus ceased to draw revenue from his drinking habits. The real evil of the present system is not that the aboriginal gets drunk, but that in order to get his liquor he is forced into contact with the worst type of alien and outsider.

In this respect conditions in Bastar are better than in many other parts of India. The Excise Department is efficient and understanding; the State controls the mahua trade, but allows the aboriginal great freedom in the use of toddy and salphi. But nothing can atone for the evil of depriving a primitive people of a natural right.

However, once that has been done, the arrangements in Bastar are as good as can be imagined. The spirit is cheap, only two annas a bottle,[2] and passes are freely granted to the Muria and Maria to purchase whatever is needed for ceremonial and social occasions. As a result there appears to be very little illicit distillation in either Kondagaon or Narayanpur. The figures of prosecutions for the five years, 1937-41, are these:

[1] The riddle 'Man and wife piss in the same hole', to which the answer is 'The two pipes of the still', probably hints at the *filth* of the Koiar's pot-still.
[2] This was in 1941.

THE MURIA'S LIVELIHOOD

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Tahsil	Population in 1941	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941	Total
Kondagaon ..	111,428	3	1	1	..	6	11
Narayanpur ..	62,305	13	..	2	..	3	18
Jagdalpur ..	236,931	16	4	14	5	26	65
Dantewara ..	90,345	58	20	35	10	20	143
Bijapur ..	25,587	4	17	29	18	23	91

Such a table does not, of course, mean quite what it says. An increase in the number of cases detected may imply greater zeal on the part of the Excise and Police staff rather than an outbreak of illicit distillation. Moreover, as the Excise Officer writes to me, 'The number of cases detected represents only a small fraction of those actually occurring, especially in the south of the State'.

Yet even so, the contrast between the Muria of the north and the more civilised Muria of Jagdalpur and the Bison-horn Maria of Dantewara and Bijapur is striking. In the ghotul, the peace-loving Muria are taught to observe the laws.

On the other hand, the incidence of the consumption of mahua spirit in 1942 was greater in the Narayanpur Tahsil than anywhere in Bastar. There is only one way of calculating this, and that is on the basis of the licence fees, which are in turn based on the presumed out-turn of the still; such figures cannot be altogether reliable, but they give at least some indication, as the following table will show: 273

Tahsil	Population in 1941	Presumed out-turn in gallons	Consumption per 100 of the population in proof gallons
Kondagaon ..	111,428	36,137	32·43
Narayanpur ..	62,305	36,700	58·90
Jagdalpur ..	236,931	63,581	26·84
Dantewara ..	90,345	42,000	46·48
Bijapur ..	25,587	11,275	44·06
Sukma Zamindari	47,914	24,200	50·51

The Muria recognize the danger of drinking to excess, and indeed they have few drunkards. 'Liquor is dangerous, even a wise woman falls through drinking.' 'An out-still in the village—quarrels in the ghotul.' But it is irresistible. 'At first it tastes nasty, but afterwards you know it for the sweetest thing on earth. You would sell everything to get it.' There is a song about drunkenness; 273 539

Gond bend khaias pond
Loi kudri katin pond,
Kalär kalärin chaniya cher,
Ghar ghar mangui burga jor.

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

154 The fear of magic is a prominent cause of the few murders committed by Muria in the last ten years. Manga of Kodoli believed that his uncle had 614 caused the death of two of his sons by magic as a sacrifice to the Yer Kanyang of his tank. One day the supposed sorcerer said to him, 'I ate up your sons and now I will devour you', whereon Manga killed him. At the Diwali festival in 1938, Boga killed the Pujari of Katagaon because he was a sorcerer and did not do his worship properly with the result that the crops failed.

In Padnar (Mardapal Pargana)—a village where there is no regular ghotul—a man called Kana suspected a whole family of practising black magic. His accusations were so serious that several of them went to live elsewhere. But one by one they returned, and by Dassera of 1939 they were all back in Padnar. One day during the festival Kana, thoroughly drunk on rice-beer, took the opportunity of telling them they were wizards, accused them of relieving themselves on the village gods, and threatened to turn them out of the village. This drove four men of the suspect family to desperation and they assaulted and killed their enemy.

154 The methods of black magic and the attempts to counter it may be studied in the interesting case of the long struggle for magic supremacy between Gurgu, the Gaita of Almer, and his enemy Sir Ju. The quarrel started when Singlu, who belonged to the Karanga clan, said to Gurgu, who is a Kaudo, 'I have lived many years in this village. Let me erect *kutukul* here and then my ancestors will live here and help me'. But the Gaita pointed out that the clan-territory (*bhum*) of the Karanga was at Kokori and Singlu should have his menhirs erected there. 'If you bring your gods and ancestors here, our gods will be neglected.' And he refused to give him land.

Singlu began his campaign by making a *kapād*, a magic door, which was represented by cutting wood into three pieces and burying them. The intention of this was that Gurgu's door (symbolizing his house) would be broken and his family ruined. But Gurgu did counter-magic and survived.

Then Singlu cast a spell over Gurgu's speech. Previously Gurgu had prided himself on being able to talk fluently in Halbi with visiting officials, but now he found that he could only talk in Gondi, and there was a general belief that as a result he would be deprived of his position as village headman. But Gurgu 'cured' this also and when I saw him was speaking excellent Halbi-Chattisgarhi.

[187] Singlu's next move was to send a white owl every night to the village. This bird, which is a sort of Ondar Muttai,[1] is very ill-omened. When it cries someone is sure to die. The villagers began to fall ill, but Gurgu managed to 'cure' this also. I was not able to get many details about these 'cures'; I gathered that Gurgu did not perform any symbolic acts of sympathetic magic, but rather by making generous sacrifices obtained the assistance of the local gods. The sacrifices, however, included a doll of dub grass which may have been a means of devoting Singlu to the deity. Gurgu also put nails of iron slag round the village boundary to 'close' it against magic, but as Singlu was already inside this precaution was not of much value.

When I visited Almer, Singlu had recently caused great consternation by taking a hare to the village boundary and sacrificing it to some unknown deity. Now only the Kaser-Gaita may offer such sacrifices and this breach of religious etiquette was believed to have offended the gods greatly, for they drove away all wild animals from before the village hunters. This was the time of the Marka Wijja Pandum, before which the chelik go out on a ceremonial hunt, on the result of which depends the success or failure of the crops. But

[1] See pp. 169f.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

839 An unusual case of cruelty, with a possibly sadistic basis, occurred in 1934. Chaitu was then a young Muria of Khuregaon, and had been the Silledar of
●674 the ghotul there. He lived with his wife, a son and a small sister called Sukti who was an idiot child, aged about seven, deaf and dumb from birth and physically incapable. Chaitu was apparently always very cruel to this child and used to beat her for not helping in the house or playing with his baby. On 3 March 1934 he moved all his household goods from his village in order to take them to Pahurbel, where he wanted to live. The goods went in a cart and the family followed on foot. Poor little Sukti was unable to keep up with the rest and several times fell down crying. Chaitu was angry at this and beat the child with an axe, striking her on the right hand, thigh and foot. He dragged her along the ground some yards, struck her on the top of the head and on the left forearm with the axe and twisted her neck till she died. They left the body there and went on their way.

Chaitu was a young man when he did this cruel deed and did not seem to think he had done anything wrong, for the dead girl—he said—was an idiot and he killed her in a fit of temper. He was sentenced to transportation for life.

839 Exhibitionism and scoptophilia are unknown as *substitutes* for normal sexuality. Chelik and motiari are continually enjoying sexual congress in company; every night a boy can watch his neighbours if he wants to, he can show off his sexual prowess if he feels so inclined. Actually there is a strong tradition against 'peeping', except on the night when the chelik shut up in a room the newly-married pair. Then they may listen and try to peep through cracks in the wall.

Older men and women often indulge in 'indecent exposure' at weddings. I once saw a leading—and normally most respectable—Muria at Nayanar strip off his loin-cloth and dance naked at a wedding in front of a large company of women, including his own daughters. Shamrao Hivale witnessed a similar incident during a festival at Masora. Old women imitate the sexual act and fondle each other's wrinkled breasts.

None of these exhibitions can be classed as psychopathic or abnormal; it is worthy of note that I have never heard of chelik and motiari exposing themselves; in the senile it is probably a simple method of attaining tumescence.

XI. Ceremonial Cross-Dressing

838 Ceremonial cross-dressing has been recorded of a number of primitive peoples and many different explanations of the custom have been advanced. 'Among the lower races', says Havelock Ellis, 'the manifestations of Eonism may occur not only, as in civilization, in a sporadic and isolated way, but also sometimes endemically in groups' and he suggests that possibly this tendency may represent not, 'as we might have been tempted to suppose, a corrupt or over-refined manifestation of late cultures, but the survival of an ancient and natural tendency of more primitive man'.[1]

Seligman used the expression 'ceremonial cross-dressing' to describe what he observed in dances of the Marshall Bennet Islanders in Melanesia and among the Lotuko in Africa.[2] Similar customs have been reported of the Sea-Dyaks of Borneo and the Omaha; and from other parts of the world a long list of examples has been given by Crawley.[3] Sometimes the change of dress is inspired by a dream and occurs occasionally and in emergency: sometimes it

[1] Havelock Ellis, *Eonism*, p. 33. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 35.
[2] E. Crawley, *The Mystic Rose* (London, 1927), Vol. I, pp. 312ff.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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THE PROBLEM OF GHOTUL INFERTILITY

Sometimes, indeed, the chelik actually try to make a girl pregnant. In Kanhargaon, two very popular motiari were betrothed to boys at Nayanar. The Kanhargaon chelik did all they could to make them pregnant so that they could force them into marriage and keep them in their own village. But they were unsuccessful, and in the end one of the girls was seduced by her own betrothed at a marriage, became pregnant and was hastily married to him. It is not uncommon, though I have no statistics on the point, for engaged couples whose parents unduly delay their marriage to force the issue either by eloping together or by trying to achieve a pregnancy.

But on the whole, the admirable ghotul rule that engaged couples should have nothing to do with one another before marriage is carefully observed. Out of 113 Lamhada boys serving for their wives and in close proximity for several years to the girls they were going to marry, only 5 made them pregnant.

Pre-nuptial pregnancy does not seem to injure the couple's relationships in marriage, provided a youth marries the girl himself. Of the 26 chelik who married the motiari they made pregnant, not one made a failure of his domestic life. At the time of my inquiries every one of them was living with his original partner and very happy with her. But those who had infertile sexual connexion with their wives before marriage showed a comparatively high divorce rate. Of the 316 who admitted to this, 14 had unsuccessful marriages. Of these 77 were the regular ghotul-wives of my informants and 68 of them were still living together when I inquired.

In only three cases during the last twenty years has a pregnancy been taken so seriously as to lead to tragedy. Two of these were the suicides which I have already described in Chapter XV. But here it was not so much the pregnancy itself as the fact that the pregnancy was the result of a connexion between chelik and motiari of the same clan that mattered. The third tragedy appears to have been due largely to a chelik's fear of the disgrace and expense, especially as it was his second experience of the kind.

At the beginning of April 1942, Birjhu, a chelik of the Aturbera ghotul, discovered with dismay that his motiari, Mori, was pregnant. Only a year before he had made another girl pregnant in the ghotul, had refused to marry her and had forced his parents to pay compensation. They did so, but they made many threats as to what they would do if it occurred again. Mori, who seems to have been in love with the boy, said that he must marry her, but Birjhu refused and said that if she told anybody that it was through him that she had conceived, he would kill her. After a little while, however, the poor girl told her brother's wife about it. When Birjhu heard she had done so, he planned to carry out his threat. On the night of the 14th of April, he told Mori he would do what she wanted and they had better elope together and get married in another village. Late at night they crept stealthily out of the ghotul and made their way through the forest. But suddenly, before they had gone very far, Birjhu caught hold of the girl and strangled her. Then he dragged her body below a tree and tied a rope round the neck to make it look as though the girl had committed suicide.

The following day a report was made at the Narayanpur police station that Mori had committed suicide. When Birjhu heard that the matter had gone to the police, he was frightened but possibly even more he was overwhelmed with sorrow and misery at what he had done. He disappeared, and two days later hanged himself from a tree in the jungle.

But this is the only incident of the kind that has yet been recorded.

Such is the general picture, familiar to students of pre-marital freedom everywhere. How are we to explain the fact that through all the years of

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 A W32 Gond A W32
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less the expression of outraged temper than a final and complete protest against a loss of dignity.[1]

It must not be supposed that because quarrels arise over work, chelik and motiari are slack or lazy. They are in fact singularly laborious and the disputes about work stand out because they occur against a background of a very high tradition of industry.

It is very rare that these quarrels end in murder. One day at the end of the rains in 1932, Kodu came home tired and hungry from the fields. His elder brother's wife, Bahe, had only got *jhau* ready for him: he demanded rice, and she retorted that 'since his arms and legs were not broken, he might cook his food himself'. He replied that as long as there was a woman in the house he was not going to do woman's work and he gave her such a severe beating that she died after a few days.

Balsai, a former Chalki of the Umargaon ghotul, lost his temper with his wife Rupoti because though he had a bad throat and cough, she cooked the irritating *dhoka* vegetable for him. He was drunk at the time and gave her a heavy blow with a wooden stool. When I saw him in jail he said that he loved his wife—'it was a mistake, not from my heart'—and that she often visited him in dreams.

Bandi (a thin big-eyed youth, formerly the Kajanchi of Kanera) had two wives. He too quarrelled with them over food. He came hungry and there was nothing ready. He got out his razor and said he was going to kill them. The elder wife ran away, but he gave two deep cuts on the arm and belly of his younger wife. She survived, but was in hospital for months.[2]

I have seen only one record of murder on account of a wife's infidelity. Mangu was the former Kandki of the Amgaon ghotul and his wife had been the Manjaro of the same ghotul. But the girl did not like him and, it is said, would never give herself to him. She ran away twice to the house of a lover at Bamhot. The second time a group of people went to fetch her back. As they were returning at night they met Mangu and handed the girl over to him. He gave her a very severe beating then and there in the forest, and a week later she died. Mangu was sentenced to two years' imprisonment.

X. The Vocabulary of Abuse

The Muria's vocabulary of abuse is meagre and unenterprising compared to that of other aboriginal tribes. Perhaps we ought not to regret this; it may be a sign of the genial and pacific temper of the people that they put so little of their imagination and colour into their swearing. But I sometimes think that their continual use of one standard and now almost meaningless expression has dulled their inventive powers.

This expression, as common as the English 'bloody' and as meaningless, is the universal *mailotia*. This is a Halbi word meaning 'to lie with your mother', but very few of those who use it so freely intend seriously to suggest that an act of incest has occurred or could occur. Indeed, the way all meaning has been drained from the expression is clearly seen in the fact that a mother can apply it to her own daughter. Girls shout it at other girls, aunts at their nieces, grandmothers at their granddaughters. There is certainly no Lesbian suggestion here; it probably simply implies 'you are capable of anything'.

[1] For a full discussion of this subject, see my book *Maria Murder and Suicide* (Bombay, 1943).

[2] The elder wife had been the Salan of Sahapal, the younger Belosa of Metawand. Both marriages were regular, the first arranged by the parents, the second a love-match. Bandi told me the two girls got on very well together.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

boys and girls. They dance clasped in each other's arms; they go about together, chelik with his arm round the neck of motiari. How revealing are Plates LXXV and XCI. In one a chelik lies on a cot with his arm on his motiari's shoulder, while she sits almost on top of him making leaves. They were not posed for the photo, and they showed no embarrassment at my approach with the mysterious camera, even though they were from a village I did not know well. In the other Plate two chelik and a motiari are listening to the gramophone outside my tent. They are completely absorbed in it and in each other. One of the boys embraces the girl with both his arms. You would not see this natural innocence in the more 'advanced' parts of aboriginal India.

But this refreshing freedom never degenerates into immodesty in public. It would be unthinkable for a chelik to dance naked—as I have seen older men do—in the presence of women or of his elders. The motiari never indulge in the cheerful vulgarity of the old women at a wedding. A chelik never catches hold of a girl immodestly in general company, though he will embrace her and walk with his arms about her. The great festival dances, though the air is full of romantic suggestion and the older men dance with the greatest licence, are conducted by chelik and motiari with complete decorum.

The sympathetic reader will realize how hopeless it is to bring our cut-and-dried judgements of sexual morality to bear upon a situation such as this. But he will also realize that even on his own standards the ghotul cannot be called immoral in the sense that it has no rules or laws or that it ignores those it has. Its regulations are as far-reaching and as strict as our own, and they are often better kept. For the rules are not imposed from without, but have been made by the ghotul-members themselves. Thus they are reasonable, adapted to the actual situation, and so easy to obey.

It is curious that while a Western visitor to a Muria village, if he is of a Puritan turn, will probably be chiefly concerned about the pre-nuptial relations of the children, the Hindu visitor—who is, of course, by far the more frequent—will be scandalized by the casual attitude of the Muria towards cows. Many years ago earnest efforts were made by Hindu reformers in the State to stop cow-sacrifice, and still today—though the majority of State officials preserve an admirable restraint in interfering with tribal customs—landlords, merchants, schoolmasters and travellers do what they can to put an end to the practice. But, except for a few centres where Hindu influence is strong, bulls and cows continue to be sacrificed and eaten all over the northern part of the State. The Muria cannot believe that this is wrong, for the gods demand it. There is nothing in their culture or mythology to forbid it—and indeed we here have a good example of the difficulty of importing a new idea into a system that has no provision for it. Yet if the Muria ever does ponder about 'moral' problems it is this that perplexes him and not any question about pre-nuptial chastity.

Stealing is generally condemned, but it is licensed on some special occasions. The chelik are expected to steal a cock when they take the newly-wedded bride and bridegroom to bed; they appear to have similar licence when they perform ceremonial dances round the village.

The incidence of crime is very low. An experienced police officer, who had served in the ghotul area for twelve years, told me that in all this time there had been no case of murder, riot, assault, hurt, or rape in connexion with the ghotul. There has not been a single case of rape against a Muria, though non-aboriginals have been arrested for raping Muria women. It is a remarkable thing that most of the crime in the Kondagaon and Narayanpur Tahsils occurs

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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in the Mardapal Pargana and along the north-eastern border in just those areas where the dormitory system is moribund. The ghotul has almost disappeared from the Mardapal Pargana, and the system is rapidly decaying along the border. A policeman told me that in his opinion ghotul-education was a most valuable preventative of crime, for boys and girls learnt to share everything and to scorn acquisitiveness and the lust of possession.

To lie and cheat is reprehensible, but does not seem to be taken very seriously. It all depends on whom you are deceiving. It may well be a positive virtue to give an inquisitive ethnographer a false date for a ceremony or direct him to the wrong village when he wants to see a funeral. To break an oath or take a false oath is not so much an offence against morality as to do something very dangerous. In Binjhli I was told of a former Pargana Manjhi who stole a lot of rice during a famine. He was put on his trial, but took a powerful oath that he was innocent. As he walked out of the court, 'his eyes broke' and he became blind.

Muria ethics, therefore, combine a firm belief in taboos and the danger of breaking them, with a faith in the value of certain amiable and social virtues. The Muria are a closely knit tribe; as their culture is still living they are bound together by many ties. They therefore regard as most reprehensible those faults and crimes that would break the solidarity of the tribe—anger, jealousy, assault, adultery that leads to these things, the practice of magic that divides a community with hatred and suspicion, the breach of tribal laws of relationship which destroy its unity, and the breach of the laws of endogamy which destroy its integrity. Those virtues are most admired which bring men together in peace and happiness—a gentle tongue, an open hand and house, the love of wife and children, loyalty to tribal law.

In conclusion, let us for a moment look at the ghotul from our own Western standpoint, and try to assess the value of the Muria attitude to life and especially to sex not by their standards but by ours. It is not the business of the ethnographer to pass moral judgements, but he may perhaps imagine himself talking to a Christian missionary or a devout Hindu reformer, both of whom take so different a view to the Muria's, regarding sex as bad and dangerous in itself and any form of 'unchastity' as the worst of sins. Is there anything to be said for the Muria way of life?

In the first place it must be said that the chelik and motiari are wonderfully happy. Their life is full, interesting, exciting, useful. The ghotul is, as they often say, 'a little school'. The chelik are 'like Boy Scouts', as I was told in a village which had a troop in the local school. There is no comparison between these children and the sad-eyed, dirty ragamuffins of villages at a similar cultural level elsewhere. In the ghotul the children are taught lessons of cleanliness, discipline and hard work that remain with them throughout their lives. They are taught to take a pride in their appearance, to respect themselves and their elders; above all, they are taught the spirit of service. These boys and girls work very hard indeed for the public good. They are immediately available for the service of State officials or for work on the roads. They must be ready to work at a wedding or a funeral. They must attend to the drudgery of festivals. In most aboriginal villages of the Central Provinces the children are slack, dirty, undisciplined, and with no sense of public spirit. Even those who attend school generally only develop a strong desire to advance their own interests at the expense of their fellows.

With all this our missionary and Hindu friends will be in agreement. 'But', they will say, 'that is not the point. Our complaint is that these youngsters

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AW32 Gond AW32

/Materials referring to crime and crime statistics will be found in Category 116, pp. ix-x, xxv-xxvi, 35-45, 50-51, 53-54, 62, 68-78, 82, 85-102, 104, 106-110, 112-114, 116-119, 121-130, 135, 137-165, 167-171, 173-179, 184, 191-193, 217, and 222-245.--Analyst/

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
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according to Mr Elwin's categories. Apart from the five intoxication murders, two were prompted by belief that crops had been bewitched, one was a fatigue crime and one was caused by a dispute as to property, one by resentment over being dunned for a debt of one anna and one by a quarrel over failure to repair the skins of a drum broken by a friend who had borrowed it, while three were the result of conjugal infidelity. There were three cases in which the villagers agreed to conceal the crime to avoid the trouble of police and court investigation. The means employed included assault with an axe, a sword, a fencing pole, a stick, a wooden stool and fists, kicking, throttling, shooting with bow and arrow, twisting of neck and stabbing with a knife. In one case the accused committed suicide to avoid the disgrace attendant on the revival of an old scandal caused by his son's association with a blacksmith girl whose murder he and the villagers had hushed up for three years.

Of witchcraft and magic as factors in crime Mr Elwin has written fully in Chapter V, and has illustrated at page 61 a typical clan-god, Anga Pen or Pat Deo (log-god), sometimes used to detect witches in the manner described at page 17, while at pages 185-6 he deals with the Maria view that a witch or a sorcerer should be killed. That view is undoubtedly widely held outside tribal circles, and the power of tribal log-gods to detect black magic is equally strongly believed in by Hindu and Muslim subjects of the State. The reaction of tribal beliefs and practices on the local Hindu rites and ceremonies is very marked, and an example of this is the way in which Raja Bhairon Deo, the great-grandfather of the present Maharaja of Bastar, installed in Jagdalpur a log-god which was either a copy of a famous log-god from Narayanpur in the north-west of the State, or, according to its present Halba Pujari, was brought by a former ruler from Dongar, the old capital, to Narayanpur, and shifted thence by Raja Bhairon Deo. This god is now the Pat Deo of Bastar *par excellence*, and four ceremonies are held in his honour during the Maharaja's Dassara celebrations. His witch-finding function strongly survives, and I well remember my amused astonishment when in 1927 during an inspection of the accounts of the Jagdalpur Temples managed by the State Court of Wards I found